

## SURVIVAL and EVOLUTION

Can man's mind continue to imprison or subjugate the fierce forces that surround him? Will his unique gift of reason repeal the laws of survival, or amend them to his advantage? His brief tenancy provides more questions than answers, yet answers must be found, and soon.

Species have survived through such wondrous adaptations as camouflage, claws, wings, and hypertolerance of extreme temperature, drought, or altitude; but their commonest solution is fecundity. The ancient ant, through the millenia, has exploited one final answer to all problems: more ants. Protection of eggs and queen rates high among their simple reflexes. So successful is this answer of the ants that they've found scant need to evolve in order to survive.

Proceeding up the scale (Which way is up?) toward man, we find less proliferation but ever more protectiveness. The young of most major species seem lovable to us, especially kids of our own. Mother love, of course, is evolution's vital device for survival when offspring come slowly and singly or in litters.

All species continue to evolve slowly, no doubt, especially those already most highly developed. We see this within our own generation in size increase, and less measurable trends toward the traits we consider beautiful or handsome. Whether we're also getting smarter is moot, for little is done to encourage it. Underdeveloped races, and less-intellectual individuals within each race, have the biggest families.

Higher birthrates, until this century, were partly offset by higher deathrates. As science exploded, however, man adapted his environment faster than himself. Advances in medicine, surgery, and nutrition deprived death of its due. Even war, for the nonce, takes a relatively lighter toll. Result: population blasted off.

In many parts of the world excess mouths already introduce famine to balance the equation. Elsewhere, congestion makes life less pleasant and productive, if not briefer, than it might be under optimum conditions--and the menace mounts apace. This threat is sensed among the educated classes, which rely increasingly on contraceptives rather than inflict wanton hazard and pain on surplus progeny. Thus the sector most likely to evolve toward higher mental capacity now contributes a diminishing quota to the next generation. Contraception spreads far slower among those who need it most, because of inertia, religious scruples, and mere lack of knowledge and materials.

Will the leader-class decimate itself and be overwhelmed by sheer numbers? Unlikely. More probably, the present widening gap between "developed" and "underdeveloped" will expand until even charity can no longer cope with the pullulating masses. At some stage it will appear obvious that, short of the inhumanity of starvation or cataclysmic war, involuntary control must be imposed on those who refuse to help themselves.

At this point the following phases become obvious: 1) Quantity restraint, a) Voluntary or b) Involuntary; 2) Quality control, a) Inhibitive or b) Meliorative. A token start at quality control already occurs when criminals, insane, or alcoholics are sexually segregated in institutions. Many of these are released, however, when the danger to their associates seems to have passed. If they revert to type or to crime, complaints resound, but complacency reigns when they breed big families, even on relief. Should society subsidize its degenerative elements?

Nor do hemophiliacs and other carriers of hereditary defects get much but aid and sympathy in their efforts to propagate. How does this differ from the thalidomide horror?

Those of us who love children can only wish them happier, more capable, lives than our own. No longer need they be the chance fruit of connubiality, the byproduct of lust, nor even a product planned as old-age insurance. Neither should the next generation's genes be selected on a roulette-wheel, now that Mendelian principles have been demonstrated so successfully on other species.

To determine just which parents can best project our progeny to new heights of understanding and achievement, may require much research; but it's time the inquiry began. Meanwhile let's mobilize against unwanted offspring--not only those unwanted by parents, but those unneeded and unwanted by society. Let our gift of intelligence prod us not merely to survive, like amplified ants, but to strive and continue evolving!

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